



Nombre _____

Clase _____

Independence Day

Lee la información.



Highlight or underline 5 or more interesting facts you learned.

It is dark in Mexico City. It is late. Families bundle children into coats and sweaters. In September, high up in Mexico City, night can be cold. Tonight, no one cares. Families come from all corners of the city. They arrive from out of town. As midnight gets closer, more and more people fill the streets. They walk in small groups, then in a stream, until they join the crowd filling the zócalo. Hundreds of thousands of people have come for one moment . . . midnight of Mexican Independence Day. **¿Cuándo?**

¿Cómo? Fireworks flash. Flags wave. Everyone waits in the jammed zócalo. There he is. The president and his family step onto the balcony at the National Palace. He waves. The crowd quiets. The president rings a bell, then lifts his hands and shouts ¡VIVA MÉXICO! Long live Mexico!

¡VIVA! the crowd shouts back, ¡VIVA MÉXICO! The president shouts again. ¡Viva México! they reply. Goose bumps tingle on women's arms. Children perch on their fathers' shoulders to see. ¡Viva Hidalgo! The president cries again, ¡Viva! the crowd yells louder, ¡Viva Allende! ¡Viva Aldama! ¡Vivan los héroes que nos dieron patria! (Long live the heroes who gave us our country) they shout. **¿Por qué?**

This is the **Grito de Dolores**, the cry for independence Mexicans will always remember. They repeat it, at midnight every September 15 in Mexico City's zócalo. The scene is the same in every state capital, in Morelia, Monterrey, Oaxaca, in small towns across the country. The highest official rings the bell to remember Father Hidalgo and the crowd gives the Grito. Parents bring their children to feel the thrill of shouting with the crowd, of celebrating independence, and of being Mexican.

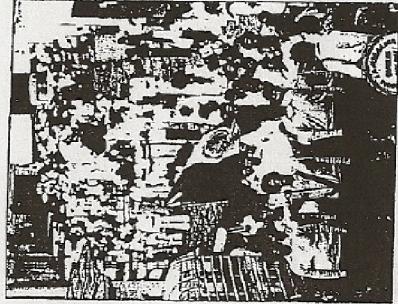
After the Grito, the crowd wanders back down the streets. Vendors sell cotton candy, corn, and sweets from sidewalk stalls. Children line up to take a ride on a ferris wheel. Fireworks explode. It is a grand celebration. **¿Cómo?**

In the United States, there are celebrations in Chicago, Los Angeles and other cities on Independence Day. Mexican Americans may throw parties at their homes on September 15, shouting the Grito at midnight. There are also big parades and fiestas held around the United States for Cinco de Mayo, Fifth of May. This holiday honors the Battle of Puebla, May 5, 1862. On that day, Mexican farmers and workers armed mostly with sticks and machetes won a battle against the powerful French army that had invaded Mexico.

¿Por qué?

A long time ago . . .

Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was a priest in the little town of Dolores. He and his friends felt, as did many other Mexicans, that they were treated unfairly by Spain. They thought Mexico should be independent, so they planned a revolution. On September 16th, Father Hidalgo went into the church and started ringing the bells. When the people came, he told them about his plans. At the end he shouted, "Viva México! Viva la independencia!" That means "Long live Mexico! Long live independence!" The townspeople took whatever weapons they could find and marched with him. More and more people joined them along the way. This was the start of the Mexican Revolution.



An Independence Day parade.

Think about this

Mexico is a mixture of many traditions. On holidays, many Mexican women wear an embroidered white blouse with a full red and green skirt decorated with sequins and beads. This dress is called the *China Poblana*, which means "Chinese woman from Puebla." The story goes that the *China Poblana* was an Indian princess who was brought to Mexico. She married a Chinese man and became known for her good works. This dress was her favorite costume, and it has become the favorite of Mexican women.

What happens on Independence Day?

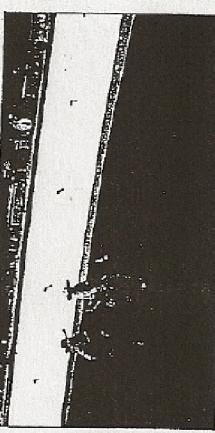
At 10:00 a.m. on September 15th every year, the president of Mexico steps out on the balcony of the National Palace and cries, "Viva México! Viva la independencia!" The crowd echoes back, "Viva México! Viva la independencia!" At the same time, the mayors of all the towns in Mexico do the same. Then everyone throws confetti, and fireworks are set off in red, white, and green—the colors of the Mexican flag.

Do Mexicans have an Independence Day?

Mexico celebrates its independence on September 16th every year. That isn't really the day Mexico became independent. It's the day when it all started.



A painting of Father Hidalgo by the famous Mexican painter, Diego Rivera. On Independence Day, people remember brave Father Hidalgo, who started the movement that led to Mexico's independence.



Charros are skillful riders who perform daring feats with a horse and lasso. Going to see charros perform is a favorite way to celebrate Independence Day.